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nótafa and mesefa respectively, are the villagers' and the folklorists' delight.

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Folk drama. Folk drama assumed much greater importance some time back than it does today. It has ramifications in several branches of folk customs, especially in those connected with weddings where the entire ceremony, lasting several days with the active assistance of the village, could be conceived as a play. To a certain extent, the more elaborate ceremonies connected with birth and death contain many dramatic elements, as do certain children's plays.

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Folk drama in the more restricted sense is nowadays performed by children only. Among them, nativity plays (betlehemezés) are the most common, and this custom has spread even into the capital city. Nativity plays have countless variations. As a rule, they are performed by groups of teenage boys who play the following roles: the kengyelfutó 'runner' guides the troop and secures admission into the houses; two "angels" who carry the betlehem, the nativity scene made of painted papier-mâché and clay and lit with candles; there is

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Saint Joseph, Herod, the King who is the leader of the troop, and several shepherds. The carols which are sung and the actual staging of the play differ from region to region but generally follow such a general scheme as, first, an introduction and greeting of the host, the annunciation, Joseph's search for shelter, the adoration (often comical) of the shepherds, and, finally, the leave-taking and the blessing of the house. Often marionettes take part in the play. The medieval sources of the Hungarian nativity plays were the marionette and mystery plays.

On Epiphany, plays similar to the nativity plays, but less common, are performed with the visit of the Magi as their subject. In these, one of the performers operates the ugrós csillag 'the jumping star,' a star made of shiny paper and mounted so that it can be suddenly raised or lowered. The shepherds of these plays wear sheepskin coats with the fur turned outside, possibly reminiscent of the early animal costumes of primitive plays. Others wear white linen costumes similar to ecclesiastical habits and tiara-like paper head gears.

Less common are the Gergelyjárás play, a student

526 During Lent godly, good Catholics know no dance
883 music or entertainment. But the young people must find some means to enable boys and girls to breathe the same air. To this end there are Lent games. One of these queer Lent games is the «mancsozás» of the Palóc, an interesting ball game. But let us begin earlier than that, as this game has antecedents. It is a custom of the Palóc people (a particular tribe of the Hungarians) that at Carnival or fair dances a girl sends a bunch of flowers to her lover by her godmother. While dancing it blooms on his hat ... As an answer to this and to express his gratitude the lad, accompanied by a friend of his, brings the girl a «mancsozó». In return he gets any amount of excellent food. The «mancs» is a wooden ball, about the size of a nut, decorated with designs which are burnt into it. The «mancsozó» is an extraordinarily shaped stick, looking like a speaking-trumpet. It is even more extensively decorated than the «mancs» and is used for hitting the «mancs», as «mancsozás» is a ball game with peculiar rules. The wooden ball is not thrown with the hand, as is usually the case when playing ball, but the «mancs» must be thrown into the air and hit with the stick. At that moment the stick emits a sound, as in the bottom of it there is a bottle, closed with a stopper, and into the bottle the carver of the stick has put shot.

524 An even more interesting Lent game is the «sajbózás»,
882 which reminds one of Midsummernight customs. This strange game with fire is still played on the Northern reaches of the Tisza river. Its special date is the first Sunday of Lent. The «sajbó» is a wooden ring, with a diameter of half a foot. Each lad makes about 15 to 20 of them. A long stick is also wanted for the game; each lad has to take one with him. In the day time they build a small reed hovel on the village pasture, with a door so tiny that it only allows one person to stick his hands into it. Before the hut they put a bench or chair, and lean a plank askew against it, one of its ends being on the ground, and the other on the chair

or bench. After dark the lads go to the hut with their long sticks and bunches of «sajbós». The girls are already expecting them, walking round the hut and singing. At the end of the song they kneel down and pray. Then the first girl of the village sets the hut on fire with a candle which has been blessed. At the fire the lads heat the «sajbó» rings one by one, until they glow. The strongest lad of the village has the first turn. When his «sajbó» is glowing, he shouts : 524 883

Sajbó, sajbó, whose sajbó is this?
This sajbó belongs to the Holy Virgin !

And with his stick he dashes the ring with such force against the plank, that it breaks away from the stick and flies off, cutting a fiery snake-like pattern in the darkness . . . Thus the game continues until they have shouted the names of all the saints, that is as many as they know by heart. Then they throw «sajbós» for the mothers, the fathers, eventually for the whole village ; even the gipsies are remembered ! Of course they do not forget their own selves, and when they have got to this point, couples are often shouted out together :

Sajbó, sajbó, whose sajbó is this?
It is mine and my sweetheart's !

783 Spring has arrived, and therefore people are filled with thoughts about the fate of the crops. Will there be a revival of nature, will there be a renewal of everything, will there be a good harvest, fertility? ... Let everything be refreshed and cleaned ... They dust, mend, whitewash, scrub, wash; men clean themselves, animals are bathed, even the soul is spring cleaned, this being the period of industrious confessing ... Everything is resplendent with cleanliness. According to a popular song even the raven washes her son on Good Friday ...

783 883 In old Hungarian calendars the second day of Easter is called «Ducking Monday», because on this day it was the custom to throw the girls into water and duck them. Now-a-days the custom is much milder, as the girls are no longer thrown into water; the lads merely lay them in the trough and refresh them with a few buckets of water so that if they marry they may become bright women. And if we add, that in some districts all this happens at the creak of dawn, it is evident that the custom is a fairly drastic one for girls even at present! Where the custom is even milder, the girls are only dragged to a well, and they pass the ceremony of the katharsis at the expense of a few buckets of water. This is well worth their while, because lovely flowers thus watered will certainly not wither away.

Not only must the girls put a good face on their enforced early morning bath, they must even pay for it: with rolls, a glass or two of brandy, in most places with a few painted eggs. These may be boiled or raw, and in Hungarian they are called «red eggs» as they are mostly painted red.

775 The egg has a manifold symbolic meaning, dating from ancient, even pre-historic times: in the latter it had a realistic religious meaning. In pre-historic tombs egg

775 shells are as often found as in medieval graves. Already at that time they were the symbol of resurrection, or were even designed to promote resurrection. In China the presenting of eggs in spring is a two thousand year old custom. Christianity took it over from the ancient people, and made it the symbol of the Saviour's resurrection. In the ancient faith of some peoples the universe developed from an egg, just as Castor and Pollux, who of old personnified light and shadow, were hatched from Leda's egg.

• 883 In some parts of the country Hungarian children, boys and girls, give each other painted eggs, which are regarded as tokens of engagement or friendship; and after having exchanged eggs, they call each other «fiancé» or friend.

531 The painting of eggs has a special technique. The designs are drawn on the eggs with wax, and the eggs are then dipped into cold paint. Painted eggs form one of the most interesting and from the point of view of design, most varied fields of Hungarian art. As in all brands of Hungarian popular art, here too flower designs are the most wide-spread form of decoration; usually red designs are applied on a white foundation. But there are plenty of brightly decorated eggs, especially amongst the Szeklers.

531 883 It is even more interesting that in some parts they shoe the eggs with tiny metal shoes, — and as the eggs are Hungarian, they even give them tiny metal spurs: they also put metal hangers on them. What can the explanation of this strange custom be? Probably that other custom, whereby the lads in some villages set up Easter trees (usually on Easter night) on the girls' gates, and on these they hang amongst other things eggs. These are called the «coat of arms» of the lads!

[Easter -- Analyst]

The May-tree

527 The origin of the May-tree is explained by a charming
773 legend . . . When the apostles Philip and James were converting the Scythians and other pagan tribes, a devout virgin joined them and helped them to win over heathens to the true faith. Therefore the pagans slandered her badly and accused her of impurity. Hearing these accusations, the poor innocent virgin stuck her staff into the ground and, turning her face towards heaven, implored God to look upon her and give some sign proving her innocence. God heard her prayer, and lo ! green leaves and twigs shot out from the stick ! It is for this reason that at dawn on the two apostles day : on the first of May, the May-tree is set up. But Hungarian lads are not very likely to remember this. All they know about the May-tree is what their song says about it :

In front of my sweetheart's house
A tall tree has grown over night,
The wings of a soft wind
Wave a red kerchief in its branches . . .

527 The May-tree is a tall young tree ; its branches are
883 lopped off and only its crown is left, forming a green top. This leaf bouquet is decorated with ribbons and bright scarves. The tree does not grow by itself, as one is supposed to think according to the songs, but the lads set it up infront of the girls' houses. In some places, if the tree happens to be very small, it is stuck either onto the gate or onto the roof of the house. The Matyó lads have the custom to carry the tree as far as the gate ; but the girls set it up and decorate it. Here usually one or two bottles of wine find their way onto the tree ; in other places painted eggs are also hung upon it. As is the case with other customs, the date of setting up the May-tree has often been mixed

527 up with the habits of other important days. In some districts
883 it is set up at Easter.

May-trees are not distributed freely in every village. There are places in which only one common tree is set up in front of the church. In one village Whitsun habits have been mingled with the May-tree custom. On Whit-Monday the lads who set up the common May-tree accompany one of their number on horseback, who is covered with green leaves as is also his horse, to every house where there is a marriageable girl. Surrounding their leaf-covered companion in the middle of the courtyard, they ask for May-tree money, threatening that unless they get it, the horseman will gallop round the whole yard. This lad, clothed in green, reminds one of certain rain conjuring customs.

There exists that other custom as well, whereby the lads elect from amongst themselves a «sad king», who — like the Witsun queen — is not allowed to laugh while they make the round of the girls' houses. Just as at Easter, so now too they get presents. This «sad king» reminds one of the initiation ceremony of some primitive peoples... In a serious initiation the candidate must not show fright nor laugh at any joke.

527 As in customs connected with budding twigs in general,
[751] the May-tree may have had power to prevent illness and ward off evils, or it may have had a purifying effect in general. At least according to popular belief!

[713] The May-tree set up in front of the church is a symbol of the restraining and ennobling tendency of the Christian religion. The first of May is the day of the apostles Philip and James. The tree set up in front of the church recalls the miracle of the stick of the virgin, who went with them. As for getting rid of evils, it is well known that Saint Philip freed the town of Phrygia from a terrible man-eating serpent: — «... While he prayed the terrible snake died and the town was released...»

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Whitsuntide customs

527 177 The Hungarians came into their present lands more than a thousand years ago, and it was naturally here that they adopted Christianity and learnt all the terms of the Christian faith; often indeed they merely clothed with a new meaning the old expressions of their former pagan creed. The Hungarian name of Whitsun: «pünkösd», like its German synonym «Pfingsten», is derived either from the Latin «Dies Pentacostis», or the original Greek «Pentakosté» of the New Testament. The Hungarians did not call this feast after the rose as did their Slav neighbours, but its popular name is «Red Whitsun», and one of the favourite flowers in Hungarian gardens is the «Whitsun rose», that is the peony. As early as the 18th century a charming Hungarian folk song mentions Whitsun in connection with the rose:

You wern't born from a mother,
You have grown on a rosebush;
On Red Whitsun's day
You were born from a rose!

This fragment of a popular song undoubtedly formed part of the habitual Whitsun songs or the game known as «Whitsun's queen».

527 789 883 857 The fact that the Hungarian name of Whitsun is merely a thousand years old does not imply that the Hungarian game of having a Whitsun queen originates from a similar date. It is much older than human memory and is merely an adaptation of the feast of fertility and fertilization, celebrated at the time of nature's blossoming. It is a pagan tradition, which lives all over Europe in the Christian world, surreptitiously and almost entirely devoid

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of its real meaning. But everywhere it has its local colour, its local bearing or its local peculiarities. According to the simplest form of this custom, the older girls rig out a little one in a white dress and carry her all over the village. The child has a wreath on her head and her face is covered by a veil. Thus they carry the mysterious little queen from house to house, from yard to yard and, dancing around her, they sing their charming song:

God has brought us
Red Whitsun's day,
We will carry around
Our little queen,
And the rose wreath of
Our little queen.
To young men we give
A bunch of sweet carnations,
To old men we give
A bottle of sweet wine,
To old women we give
A delicious dove pie.
I wasn't born from a mother
I have grown on a rosebush,
On Red Whitsun's day
I was born in the dawn, etc.

At the end of the song they lift the little queen by her arms with the cry: «let's lift the queen!» — She is usually a small girl of five or six and lifting her veil they say to the lady of the house: «May your hemp grow as high as this!» It is well known that amongst other things hemp is also the symbol of fertility. As the lifting of the Whitsun queen symbolizes a magic charm to ensure a good hemp harvest, so sitting her on the ground is supposed to prevent the hemp from growing. This is what the procession does if the hostess will not give the queen a warm reception, or will not allow her to enter the court-yard, or if having let her enter it, she puts nothing into the basket of the ladies-

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What is to-day? What is to-day?
It is Red Whitsuns day;
To-morrow will be, to-morrow will be
Its second day, its second day.
Andrew is gallant and grand,
He is married and a good dancer;
Her husband is a rare lad,
While she is as good as gold.
Hold well, pull well
The bit of your horse,
It shan't trample, it shan't crush
Whitsun flowers, red peonies.
Whitsun's flower, the red peony
Leant over the main road,
The bride shall pick her up
And tie her into a wreath.

In this variation sung on the Great Plain Andrew alone is mentioned, but in another known in Transdanubia the queer, tottering lines of the ancient text speak of the princess as well.

My sister, my sister, my sister,
My Lady Saint Elisabeth,
I would willingly ransom you
If only I had a ransom.
Why did you give yourself
To someone else, to someone else?
I gave myself
To some one else,
God shall be kind to me,
Take care of me.

How did the Hungarian princess, sent as a bride to Thuringia at the age of four, find her way into the playful remnants of this ancient pagan custom? Perhaps through the legends woven about Elisabeth? The beautiful figure of Saint Elisabeth fitted perfectly into the Whitsun games, all mixed up with «Whitsun roses», since the alms meant for her poor had turned into roses in her lap. In other

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games played by the children at Whitsun, Saint Elisabeth stands on the drawbridge, facing the people who want to enter the castle; in the next stage they spy around the castle in order to find out whether there is a marriageable girl in it; they then sing about Elisabeth's «queenly qualities»; finally they kidnap her after the ancient manner of acquiring brides, and carry her off into a royal tent, made of silk.

Though learned research is not quite certain about the connection, it is undeniable that the ancient pagan «king of the spring» feasts have had their separate Hungarian development. We mention this merely as a proof of the existence of such local, in this case Hungarian, modifications.

While the rosy cheeks of the little Whitsun queen fit so beautifully the rosy mood of Red Whitsun's day, in a few places there are also Whitsun kings and Whitsun royal elections. The Hungarian proverb: «It lasts as long as a Whitsun kingdom» (meaning quickly passing glory) is derived from this custom. In many places Whitsun's kingdom resolves itself into the election of an arbiter of young men. Small wonder, considering that once the two meant the same thing. The Whitsun king is elected now-a-days, but at one time he had to win a competition to acquire such exalted rank; he had not merely a high position, but owned a royal throne! There was no literal throne, but he had the title of king, and Whitsun's king had power, exceptional rights and regalia. In Transdanubia the competition was often a race run on horseback. Usually the cleverest lad acquires his distinction by strength and shrewdness. Whitsun's Kingdom lasts for a year. It can only continue if in the next year's race Whitsun's King wins again. Otherwise the privileged position is gone, and so is power and the right to eat and drink at the expense of other lads! In one word the lovely dream — Whitsun's Kingdom — is over!

527 As it is now in this game, so is it with real kings in
883 the case of primitive people, and so was it probably with the ancient Hungarian leaders. The king was sent asleep, but into eternal sleep, as perhaps the Hungarians did with their leader Álmos, who led them as far as this country. Álmos in Hungarian means «sleepy». According to simple people death is only a kind of sleep; children have the same notion.

[773] The Hungarian peasant explains the election of the Whitsun king as «. . . the imitation of an old custom. Once upon a time the councillors of the country elected every year a new king on Whitsun's day; he was usually a shepherd boy. They gave him a sleeping draught, and they were wont to seat him on the throne in an unconscious state. But his power only lasted until the following Whitsun. Then he was put asleep in the same way and was sent back to his old place.»

In the case of many of the more primitive peoples real kingship is more or less a Whitsun kingdom — passing glory. It does not last until the king's life is over, in fact it ends when the people so decide, or when the king is conquered. Then he is set aside and a stronger man takes his place.

[881] A few of the old customs in use for the initiation of adolescents have found their way into the custom of Whitsun's kingdom. We have already referred to the fact that in one variation of the game a bridgeroom appears beside the queen, and that one ancient Hungarian royal marriage has also been mixed up in it.

883 Serious ancient customs or habits are thus turned in
657 the course of time into childish games, bearing faint marks
527 of old memories. A thousand years ago the Hungarians brought terrifying new war tactics into Europe, and pious Western friars added to their prayers: «From the arrows

of the Hungarians Good Lord deliver us !» These terrifying arrows have also become children's toys in our days... Two worlds preserved the things men used in ancient time: the world of primitive people and the world of children. In these two worlds the King of Whitsun lives. In one quite seriously, in the other only as a game.

In some parts of the country merely the name «little queen of Whitsun» is still alive, but her four companions, who represent the four evangelists, bear no trace of pagan influence. The first mentions a lion, the second an angel, the third a lamb: the symbols of the evangelists. The fourth ought to mention the eagle, but he only refers to the regal bird's empire of the clouds in the air, and in a way which almost suggests rain conjuring:

Oh wine, dear wine,
Has no cloud been this way?
A cloud shall come this way
From the lofty sky!

A veil however covers the face of the little queen according to ancient custom...

The feast of wheat

«Wheat, wine, peace and a good looking wife !» — Thus does the Hungarian man summarize the collection of wishes he expects life to fulfil for him, — or which he wants to gain in his fight with Fate. The wine of Tokaj, Eger, Badacsony, Somlyó, the bread and festive cakes of the Tisza district, stay in the memory of the person who has once tasted them. Did we wish to express the longing for these things in a popular form, we would say:

Whoever has drunk the water of the Tisza,
Always longs to come back to it!

Traditions of the spinnery

883 When people talk about Hungarian customs, the spinnery is usually brought up as one of the most typical. It is supposed to be the loveliest and most romantic flower in our garden of traditions. This fact can only be explained by the frequent reference to the spinnery in our popular songs, which were modelled on our folk songs. Inventing these used to be very fashionable in the second half of the 19th century. The gipsies still play the tune: «Songs are afloat in the spinnery» — and the listeners are moved by the mystery of a popular custom which they obviously do not understand, they are all the more impressed if they can sing the pretty words to the music of the gipsy band. «... little spinnery, little maize plucking room ...» is another of these songs, to which people listen worrying but little about the mysterious meaning which lurks behind the words. After all, it is the «mood» which counts, and according to our poets a mood as well as a kiss is better experienced than explained.

An-tan to-ress
Fuss-fass kom-poress
Ané-tané chokolade
Kikiriki is bad!

Present day children in the native country of John Arany (a famous Hungarian poet of the 19th century) also just sing these words: they have never yet tried to explain them. They are part of their games, as the song: «...oh little spinnery...» is one of their enjoyments...

Whatever may have lead us to mention the spinnery as one of our most typical and still practiced national

customs, it is worth our while to get acquainted with its inner life. This custom, like so many others, is kept alive by the opportunity it provides for youth to meet, for romance and playing with the fire, for the meeting of man and maid. It means play amidst work and work amidst play: its frame is work, its essence, play. This is best proved by the fact that in many parts of the country the spinnery as well as the carnival festivities only last until Shrove Tuesday. It is certain that the finest threads have never been spun in the spinnery. Though frothy linen can not be woven from the yarn twisted in the spinnery, those yarns can be used for something else: 883 ●

> The maid is learning how to spin,
> That wedded she shall know a thing,
> She has spun some clues, exactly nine;
> She has thrown her distaff o'er her head,
> Her thread is not the best of threads:
> It will be woven into a clothes-line.

And when there is a chance of dancing in the spinnery, the youths take the words from the girls mouths when they shout:

> . . . spindle, distaff, reel,
> I wish you all to hell!

It was this side of the spinnery's double nature which for centuries incited the authorities to fight against it. But the spinnery, like all ancient customs, has defended itself valiantly against all attacks, and its total destruction has not been achieved to this very day. It has only disappeared without leaving a trace in the districts where factory industries have successfully extirpated the whole art of spinning and weaving. An example of a large area in which the spinneries have completely disappeared is the Great Hungarian Plain, where the material advancement of the people soonest enabled them to buy linen and cloth for money and throw away their traditional tools. 178 883

883 the people soonest enabled them to buy linen and cloth for money and throw away their traditional tools.

The spinnery provides an opportunity for winter meetings. The Szeklers have called it after the tools used in it «spinning room», and after the singing going on in it «chorus». According to a general custom its premises are usually rented, and often there are several spinneries in one village. These places are small, not taking more than a group of eight to ten girls at a time. These groups are also called classes, like forms at school. The priest, or teacher, or landlord often runs spinneries with the object of helping needy farmers with their proceeds; but from the point of view of ancient custom these do not deserve special attention, as they are not suitable for the free development of moods, games and customs. The participants are reserved. It is like a wedding without music... The work is not real and the fun is half hearted... To use an expression coined on the Great Plain: it is too small for a bed and too big for a cradle! The spinnery is always an evening affair, although in some places the girls go to each other for practice also in the day-time, but that again is not the real thing, as the young men are missing, having other things to do. From the point of view of ancient custom the women's spinnery is not important either. There, too, work is taken much too seriously!

883 524 Spinning is a very monotonous, uninteresting task. It is a common occurence to see an old woman dropping her spindle and falling asleep. If the same thing happens to a girl it is a serious disgrace. Therefore, even if they are alone in the spinnery, they joke and sing so that their work shall go better. When the lads begin to drop in, they are even more awake. Spirits rise high, jokes come faster, and the spindle wants more attention. The girl who drops hers, must pay a ransom for its return. Ransoms vary as

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883 524 in round games. The most frequent ransom is a kiss; but it depends on the lad whether he gets as much as one coin from this inexhaustible purse.

They can pick up my spindle,
But I shant take it, I say,
Not this year and not the next,
Not for a kiss and not for pay.

When the young people have run out of tunes, they then turn to riddles; these puzzles often concern the tools used for spinning, weaving or hemp work.

The birch tree darted
The oak tree started
A thousand birds flew up,
One's wings got torn,
And then all the thousand stopped!

What is it? It is a thread breaking on the spinning wheel.

When their supply of riddles is also running low, they turn to games. To inaugurate a new girl is a game in itself. Those who have just reached the age enabling them to spin are called the *New Girls*. The others look for a little hole in the earth floor and pour water into it. This is supposed to be the «well». They seat the new girl by its side on the floor, to guard the well and prevent anyone drawing water from it. They even give her a whip to drive away all those who want to use the well. The bigger girls stand around her and try to draw the water, which the new girl guards. Meanwhile the girls standing behind attract her attention. As she turns round, those standing in front of the «well» pull her across the puddle! The girls only play this joke when there are no lads about.

The «gedo» is another of the girls' games. One of them makes a hump on her back with a bread basket, sticks on a beard and moustache of oakum, dons a coat and a hat,

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— in one word dresses up as a man. Then she walks around the girls, asking each in turn:

«Has old Gedo been here?» — The answer is: «Yes, he has been here.»

«What did he want?»

«He wanted girls.»

«Did you give him girls?»

«Yes, we gave him girls and we will give you girls too, if you can plaster a stove (or plant cabbage, or make sheaves, etc.).» — She must now mimic the task mentioned. If she does it well, the girl who set the task has to take her place, if she is bad at it, she gets another task. This is a very primitive pantomime, the lads will be better at their games!

While the girls are still alone, they also like fortune telling and love charms. These are games, yet the girls believe in them a little. One of them is called «cucorka». The «cucorka» is a little hemp ball, which should rise in the air if set on fire. And if it does not fly up it means something bad: her lover is not true to her, or there will be no wedding... Sometimes the girls clap their hands so that the «cucorka» shall fly higher and they egg it on with the song:

Cu-cu-cu-cu-corka,
The magpie sent you word,
She wants a longer tail...

Another game is to make a triangle from oakum and lay it on the table. One of its corners represents a girl, the two others her two young men. The oakum is set on fire in the girls corner and the lad, whose corner the fire first reaches, loves the girl best. Of course the men have their own games and jokes, and keep inventing new ones for the girls and for their own amusement. The men approach the spinnery singing and the girls work better and harder as this song becomes audible from the street:

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Good girl do spin,
But think also of something else,
There is a lad outdoor in the cold,
Let the poor thing in!

Of course they let him in... Obviously he is welcome, when he has been so eagerly expected! With the lads present, spirits soar, the company is more cheerful, the songs louder, the jokes livelier... The work however, does not follow the same crescendo tendency!

The men have many more jokes up their sleeves and they are inexhaustible in improvising. It would take a whole book to describe all their games! But let us not omit one of their delightful, singing, mimic plays! — It is nothing but a primitive ballet, still alive, charming herald of the ancient trinity of poetry, music and motion... In Szekler spinneries, where lovely frail girls form the public, it is still performed to this very day. This ancient ballet lives not only in the pine forests of the Hargitta mountain (Transylvania), but also in Transdanubia, in the Bakony hills. Usually two men sing it, the one asking, the other answering. Occasionally it is also sung in a choir; its name is «sowing song».

I'd like to know how the Hungarians,
I'd like to know how the Hungarians
Sow their oats!

Showing it:

That's how the Hungarians sow
That's how the Hungarians sow
Their oats very slowly!

I'd like to know how the Hungarians
I'd like to know how the Hungarians
Reap their oats, reap their oats!

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Showing it:

That's how the Hungarians reap
That's how the Hungarians reap
Their oats very slowly!

Thus the song goes on, with little variation in the words, but with the mimicry altering from verse to verse: they ask and show how the Hungarians sow, reap, carry in, thrash and sell their oats. We are already inclined to think that the money is safe in the drawer and the remnants of the oats in the granary or mealark. But no! A play without a point is like an i without a dot. That is why there comes a sudden turn:

I'd like to know how the wife
I'd like to know how the wife
Steals the oats, steals the oats!

And then finally:

I'd like to know how the wife
I'd like to know how the wife
Drinks its price, drinks its price!

This is also told to the future wives, lest they should imagine that a man sees nothing and knows nothing and is good for nothing except for what the «Selling Song» thinks him fit: «.... a watch-dog, a fire-poker...»

Time however is getting on and all good things end... But not in a hurly-burly way. Things in the spinnery have to be finished neatly, «the full stop must be inserted», as a house has to be roofed to be complete! The finish — in those parts where the custom is still maintained — is the selling of the girls. Two older lads produce a twisted kerchief, and drive a girl to each lad... The kerchief is needed for those girls who «do not want to go...» And as it is unseemly to want to go, the two men throw the kerchief behind the girl's back and thus «help» her to go!

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883 524 Which means that they simply thrust her into a youth's lap! All this is accompanied by a song. If they feel like it, the song is long, otherwise it is merely a short selling song.

Double carnations have grown outside my garden,
I want you and only you, my Master Martin!

And at the final syllable the girl is already in the man's lap... There are longer selling songs too, and the interesting part is that in these the geese are mentioned in the same sense as in those parts of Midsummernight's song in which the couples are charmed together.

I drove away my goose into the middle of Saint George,
I sent my husband after it, to drive my goose home.
The goose shall come home, and my husband shall get lost,
But no! he shan't get lost, he is a nice, pipe smoking fellow!
He would be good here at home as a watch-dog,
As a watch-dog, as a fire poker,
My geese, my geese, there are twelve of you,
All the twelve of you are dead white,
Two of them are brown, the third is their mother,
What shall be the name of the fourth?
If it can't be Martin, I shan't have a lover,
But if it is Martin, I shall have a lover!

This can only mean that the pagan remnants of Midsummernight's mating feast have taken refuge in the closed territory of nocturnal spinneries, and here continue their life, which has been whittled away for centuries by secular and church prohibitions. In the first half of the 17th century a protestant preacher noted that *the boys played ball with the girls* in the spinneries. How could they have played ball in a small house, crowded with people? We do not know, but according to the preacher the spinnery is an occasio mali: a suitable place for wickedness, an abode of depravity... There is some truth in this. The girl having been driven to a man, comes the last verse of the song:

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For thee, to thy bed,
She shall lay on thy bed,
Thank thou for it!

Or: For him, to his lodging,
Let's cook for his wedding,
Thank thou for it!

And the girl has to thank for it, if only with a shy, low «thank you!» If she does not do this, perhaps disliking her «share», the choir damns her with ugly words:

Out in the graveyard
Nine dogs lie dead,
Spoons and forks are near them,
Eat them Mary, go ahead!

This happens especially in cases where the choir (the village really) has already given its blessing to a wellknown love affair. As soon as every lad has got his girl, as though they were following the lines of Midsummernight's song,

Your night
Flowery Saint John
Is so very light
— — — —
It was light so far
Now let it be dark.

they turn down the lamp and for a certain time, — for a few minutes, — darkness and complete stilness reign in the spinnery. One or two older men, left without partners, occasionally strike a match, not for the sake of looking at the roof, but to see what the partners are doing! Soon however the match is knocked out of their hands. After having lit the lamp again, the young people disperse and go home.

Two more proofs showing the close relationship between this ancient spinnery custom and the pagan Midsummernight feast are furnished by a Transylvanian «sell-

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ing song», which is sung to this day, and by the notes of the above mentioned preacher. This is what the song says about love and the sun:

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When I think of you
My beautiful one,
Then love *flames*
Up in me.
Fire *flashes, the sun shines;*
Before his dazzled eyes
Roses blossom
And lilies bloom.

And finally this is what the above quoted protestant preacher wrote in 1629: «They used to lay a Saint John's fire in the middle of the village. Then they sat around it and spun. But we made them give up this custum.»

Thus the winter spinnery harbours amongst other things the tradition of a pagan Midsummernight feast, which fled into its precincts for protection against the Christian concept of life...

Plays of Bethlehem
Hungarian marionettes

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The Bethlehem players appear at the same time as the minstrels, in most places at Christmas, on the 25th of December, when the sun has its resurrection and gets stronger, and when the days begin to lengthen. Ever since ancient times this has been a great feast: the joyous, loud pagan feast of the Sun, that is the Sun-god. It is the beginning of a new year, of new hope, the recurring expectation of new light, new warmth, new life... Paganism awaits the new Sun, Christianity the birth of Christ... Is it an acci-

796 1497. In the Saint James church of Lőcse the beautiful wooden figures, carved for the «Bethlehem» by Master Paul of Lőcse, the famous sculptor, can still be seen. In the churches the «Bethlehem», stripped of acting, still lives, even the marionettes of Bethlehem occur, also remnants of medieval church customs.

This is the past of the Bethlehem games, which at present are played by the people, mostly only by the children; it shows the interesting development of that opponent of the winter solstice games, which had been called into life to destroy them.

796 883 The dramatic plays, like the marionettes of Bethlehem, also live to this day in certain villages amongst the people, that is really amongst the children. Even a mild church play still exists according to which, on Christmas night the children take a beautifully decorated little Bethlehem into the church, place it on the altar and, there before it, they act the present day form of the games of Bethlehem, with all the verses and songs which go with it. Such is the custom in Transylvania, in certain villages around the river Nyárád.

The plays of Bethlehem are performed in practically every part of the country, with their text more or less rounded off; even in Budapest tiny bands go from house to house with modest «Bethlehems» and modest songs !

The songs and plays have many variations; the tunes are mostly alike, while the texts, the plays and the costumes are very varied. In the West the songs and the acting are short, towards the east these get longer, while the fullest words and tunes are found in the Catholic Szekler districts of the county of Csik, which used to be Hungary's most eastern county. There the acting is also most serious and they adhere very conscientiously to the ancient church and school text. Especially in the Protestant districts of the Great Hungarian Plain the sepherd scenes have grown out

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of proportion, and in some places there are even comic shepherd plays, in which merely a slight memory of the ancient mysteries still glitters. It is interesting that in some places not boys, but girls, led by an older woman, go round with the «Bethlehem». In the picture we see such a group. Keeping to the most typical amongst the many variations. we will give a short description neither of a Szekler, nor of a Catholic play of Bethlehem, but of one practiced in a Calvinist village.

Seven boys, aged 14 to 16, make up the caste: the King, that is Herod; Joseph; the runner (that is the envoy); two angels, two shepherds. The terrible king is dressed up as a Hungarian hussar: he wears red trousers, a blue dolman, a fur cape thrown over his shoulders, a hussar shako adorns his head, a curved sword hangs by his side, boots with big spurs cover his feet... The two shepherds wear fur coats touching the ground, the fur turned outside; they hold big sticks in their hands, and have sheepskin caps on their heads. The others are usually dressed in white, their mothers having given them the white skirt and the blouse, and they wear both on top of their ordinary clothes. A bright coloured ribbon is tied around their waist and a fine, high paper cap, decorated with bright coloured paper chains, covers their heads; Joseph has a broad, wooden sword, like that of a headsman; the runner has a big stick, which is covered with bright coloured paper, besides this, tiny bells are fastened to the top of it. The Bethlehem is a light, wooden, church-like structure, decorated with brightly coloured paper and long paper chains; it is done as well as the children can possibly do it. A candle burns in it; it lights up the floor of the Bethlehem, which represents a green sward, the holy pictures on its walls, the carved wooden animals around the stall and the Child in the manger. The two angels carry the «Bethlehem».

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The runner goes ahead and in beautiful rhymes asks permission for his party to enter the house ! If they are welcome, they go in (only Joseph stays out) and the Bethlehem is put down on two chairs. The two shepherds lie down in front of the Bethlehem and sleep ... The others begin to sing :

An angel from Heaven
Has come down to you
Shepherds, shepherds !
Hurry at once
Towards Bethlehem
And you shall see, you shall see
The Son of God
Who was born to-day
In a stable, in a stable ...

At the end of the song, Joseph speaks from outside and, as a tired traveller, asks to be let in. King Herod gives orders to the runner to see «who dares to knock at my door with such courage in his heart». Joseph, still from outside, says what he is doing :

At the order of King Herod
From Nazareth I came for the census,
So long as I don't get a lodging,
I shall not go away.

With the help of the runner, negociations start between the king and Joseph. The cruel king gradually softens and lets in Joseph. Joseph then tells the great news, that «in the manger of an ox a child has been born» who is the Saviour Jesus ... The listeners are amazed, especially at the fact that the Saviour has been born in a manger ... Therefore they ask Joseph, of course in the form of a beautiful song :

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But Joseph what did you think,
When you chose a stable,
Could you find no other resting place
In this town?
Did you prefer the company of cattle,
And the manger for the Chud?

Then, waking up the shepherds, the whole troupe sings together:

Let's go, let's go, let's rejoice,
Let us try to please our Lord Jesus,
Let's respect Him as our Lord,
Let's respect Him as our new Lord!

The shepherds kneel down, they offer the Child a cheese and a lamb, and mingle a few shepherd's jokes with their respectful words... Then they all get up and sing together, announcing the birth of Jesus in a stable, in a manger amidst cattle, where «the mouths of calves are his warming stove...» After that the king blesses the house in which they were welcomed, not omitting to wish the girl «a priest who'll have to perform the marriage ceremony over her...» Then comes one more beautiful song:

A beautiful rose has budded
The whole world expected it for so long:
In Bethlehem a green twig sprouted:
It is a king; His Majesty was brought from Heaven,
It is a king; His Majesty was brought from Heaven!
When the Virgin wants to lull
Her babe to sleep,
Her son crying in the manger,
This is what she sings for him:
Oh life, oh sunshine,
Oh dear Jesus,
Oh life, oh sunshine,
Oh dear Jesus!

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At the end of this long song, — having collected a few, modest presents — they say good night and press the door handle . . . The runner sprints ahead, to find a new house where they will be let in. The bells on his stick form a rythmical accompaniment to his steps . . . With it he beats the time of the songs too . . . As we hear the gradually vanishing sound of his bells, his gesticulations and his ancient noisy instrument, they remind us of the noise made by the minstrels and, even beyond that, of the ringing, droning, equipment of the Shamans . . . The shepherds' coats, their fur turned outside, remind one of the mimes representing animals . . .

Into what a beautifully gentle form the winter solstice games were transformed from their ancient paganism . . . What a beautiful song they sing on the day of the solstice : «Oh life ! Oh sunshine ! Oh dear Jesus !»

But the performers of the Hungarian Bethlehems also preserve the memory of the Bethlehem marionettes which were shown in medieval churches. They act the scenes of Bethlehem livening and spicing them to the great joy of the youthful public ! In some places these marionettes are made to dance in the Bethlehem, in front of the manger, as though to entertain the Child Jesus. For this purpose a special Bethlehem is needed, in which the figures can be moved from below. In other places the marionettes move just outside the Bethlehem. In one place the marionettes are : the devil, the chimneysweep, two shepherds, one performer called «Lackó», a Hungarian peasant, an actress called Jutka Marinka and the bell ringer, in other places : two shepherds, Death, Herod, the bell ringer; Joseph, and the devil. Sometimes we find a few other figures as well, but they are not very different. Now let us see something of this charming game: in one village in the upper Tisza valley, the marionettes of the shepherds' dance each time the Bethlehem performers

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sing ... When the five shepherds lie down, the marionettes do the same thing. When the chorus urges the shepherds to start for Bethlehem because the Saviour of the world has been born, «You'll find in the manger — covered with chaff — a tiny Child — O halleluja !» — the marionette of Herod appears and says : — «I am Herod, the King of the Jews, I know no Lord over me, I am not even frightened of Death». The doll of Death appears : «Come, come Herod, are you sure you are not frightened — even of Death?» Herod (the marionette) backs in terror ... Death snarls ar him : «Don't edge away ! It is no good, you are already mine ! Bang Herod!» And the marionette of Death knocks off Herod's head. Now the devil appears, he beats and spits at the doll's head of the cruel king, then he throws Herod out of Bethlehem and he himself also retires. When the older shepherd says good bye in the name of the Bethlehem performers, and also asks for some tiny present, the marionette, representing Joseph, the bell ringer, also appears, and he also has a request : «Give a few pennies to Joseph the bell ringer for candles !» It is not in vain that he wears a big wallet at his side ...

Candles are needed in the Bethlehem, so that their light may vibrate and flicker in the snow covered nights of quiet Hungarian villages. This is the point at which the once enchanting mysteries have arrived from the resplendant altars, the grand halls and proud vaults of colossal domes ... They returned to the place from which they once started : to the tiny villages of poor peasants, shepherds and farmers, to the badly lit abodes of humble folk like these.

Well then good farmer,
Now that you start us on our way,
God's blessings shall
Fall onto your house,
God's blessings shall
Fall onto your house !

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796 On the twenty-seventh of December the Hungarian peasant has his wine-casks blessed, whereupon he drinks the grace of St John, which is held to give strength and to ensure good health for him who has partaken of it.

The twenty-eighth of December is the collective day of the minor Saints who have no day of their own in the calendar. This day is observed in Hungary by a peculiar old folk-custom known as the "whipping of the innocent". The lads and men administer a sound whipping to the girls or their wives with a birch or willow twig which, by being kept in warm water indoors, has just begun to bud. The victim of the whipping, which is administered in the hours of dawn, is assured of becoming healthy, fresh of foot, beautiful, and fertile. The bud is the symbol of creation and of fertility.

883 Closer and closer we come to the end of the year. The merry days of Carnival are here, and it is the law of life that youngsters grow up, the grown-ups age, and those who have reached maturity settle down in married life to found a family to perpetuate the race and its traditions. Winter time is the time for courtship, and is there any better place for the boys to meet girls and for the girls to meet boys than in the spinnery?

Among all the quaint institutions of Hungarian folk-lore, we can hardly think of any quainter, more romantic, or merrier than the spinnery. Romantic it is naturally, because the origin and the immediate end of the spinnery are, as they always have been, romance. It is the age-honoured institution of finding a mate, which has, however, sometimes aroused the reasoned sobriety of the clergy, as has been mentioned in the chapter on folk-dancing. It is the institution into which the romance of St Ivan's Day has fled and in which the sacred flame of love is still burning as ever.

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583 To be accurate, there are really two types of spinnery. One is that of the girls, and the other is reserved for the married women. This latter is a place of serious work where the gossamer-like threads for fine Sunday linen and the sturdy material of heavy service goods are spun. The girls' spinnery is different. It is the place where the young girls who are approaching womanhood learn how to turn the spinning-wheel, the finely carved handle of the distaff, and also how to "turn the heads of men", as the winning of a man's love is popularly known. It is more than anything else a place of play and of merry-making, an outlet for gaiety after work, a place which will close its doors at the end of Carnival.

Spinning for spinning's sake is monotonous, tiresome work. To make it more interesting the girls mix it with song and play. It is only too natural that the songs should be songs of love and the games allude to the purpose of the spinnery: love and marriage. To make sure of success, spinning is done in the late afternoon and in the evening, when it is certain that all the eligible men are free and ready to yield to the temptations of the spinnery. While the girls busy themselves with work and play, the boys gather at the inn or in front of the house of one of them, and thence, to the tune of merry, mischievous songs, they approach the spinnery. The girls inside act as if they were deeply absorbed in their work and apparently do not notice the boys, who drift in slowly and take seats on the benches along the wall. But soon one of the girls will drop her spindle; a boy will pick it up with the speed of a hawk and return it for no lesser ransom than a kiss. Games and jokes of all sorts and kinds follow. Riddle games are played, jokes are told, the old spinnery songs are sung till a

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883 late hour, and until closing time, at midnight, the place is alive with the merriment of witty improvisation.

The purpose of the final game is to bring two lovers face to face, and when the double row facing each other is complete, someone will — as if by accident — put out the lights, and while they are being lit again (and it takes some time to light an old-fashioned oil-burner) hearts will throb together and lovers' lips unite in a passionate kiss.

517 six thousand urban and factory cultural groups are participating in the competitions. Eighty-five thousand participants, the overwhelming majority of whom are workers, are members of choirs, dance or dramatic groups.

583 When leaving the cultural center he is almost knocked down by a group of gay young boys, among them one of his apprentices. The young people are on their way to the sports ground of the factory for their football training. The football team of the works is among the best competing for the national championship. The young workers of the factory are great sports fans; many outstanding swimmers, gymnasts, wrestlers and athletes have come from their ranks.

000 On the way home he meets an old friend of his: Janos Toth, one of the fitters of the motorcycle factory. Janos Toth is in a great hurry, his face shines with excitement and pride. Why? Because of his wife . . .

[623] Before the people of the district this afternoon, the District Council is rendering an account of the work accomplished. Everywhere in Hungary, members of the local councils, local organs of public administration, regularly report to the population on the work done, the problems of the day and the tasks of the immediate future. This is how the people of the district exercise direct control over the leaders, and this is how they participate in the work of the Councils. Today it is Janos Toth's wife who makes the report; she is deputy-chairman of the executive committee of the XIII district Council. Mrs. Toth was a weaver at a textile factory in Buda.

562 "Would you ever have believed this possible? . . . " the excited friend asks Ferenc Gergely. And he begins to enumerate the positions won by Hungarian proletarian women who counted for nothing in the past. There is a minister among them—she, too, was a weaver, a deputy minister, a Council chairman, which is equivalent to a mayor, factory directors, attorneys, judges and who knows

ches leading the way. The Roman Catholic "Actio Catholica" maintains a separate social service organization. The concerted and unremitting efforts of the Roman Catholic church organizations follow the principles laid down by the Primate of Hungary. The Catholic parishes have been dealing with begging by well organized and proven methods, and are continuously helping the needy. The synod of the Protestant Church directs the Protestant congregations in the support of certain social welfare activities, and through the "Friendly Alliance" (Szeretet Szövetségek) it participates in country-wide social welfare drives and other far reaching movements. The Evangelical Church works along similar lines. The Churches often planned and carried out social welfare enterprises in those precarious times when restrictions on the sovereignty of the country and its public finances impeded the work of the state.

In addition there are over a thousand charitable organizations in Hungary, and a great many of the clubs — through their central organizations or independently — are active in social welfare work. These societies, especially their central organizations (mostly clubs for women), are instrumental in carrying out certain phases of the public welfare policy, and do exemplary work in child welfare, war relief work and the supervision of rural sanitation. The Government supports the work of the above societies with grants-in-aid.

"Levente."

The national defence organization of Hungarian youth (*levente* organization) is engaged in important social welfare work in different parts of the country. The *leventes*

883 take an active part in the state-sponsored charitable collections. For instance, they carried out the collection of winter clothing in 1942 for the soldiers fighting at the front, when they collected 200 freight car loads of winter clothing and textiles. The *leventes* also helped with the collection of money for the Red Cross and for the aid of soldiers' families. One of their noteworthy achievements was the organization of the "Soldiers' Christmas" drive. During this drive they called on every family of soldiers fighting at the front who were wounded or missing, and also called at the homes of every enlisted man. They wrote reports on every case in their survey, and at Christmas time sent gifts to the soldiers and took presents to the soldiers' families.

The work of the "Husbandry Branch" of the *leventes* deserves notice. This work is done in rural communities where they try to improve conditions in the villages by guiding the spare-time activities of the poor into profitable channels. Instruction is given in vegetable culture (particularly peas and beans), also in methods of increasing the production of oil-seed. Organizing the systematic saving and collecting of waste material, scrap iron and textiles, was done by them.

The improvement in the standard of public health was due, directly and indirectly, to this organization. It is nation-wide in extent, and each member is compelled to undergo periodical medical examinations free of charge. The medical organization which looks after them has mobile hospital units which practically call at the *leventes'* homes. The poorer ones are given vitamin preparations to help their growth. Their social well-being is fostered by building "Levente homes," by sending them to summer

camps and by supplying clothing and shoes to the needy members. As all young men are members it is the most wide-spread organization in the country both from a national defence and social welfare standpoint.

III. AGRARIAN SOCIAL POLICY.

In the first decade following the Treaty of Trianon social conditions in the rural districts deteriorated in consequence of the changed economic structure of the country, which was aggravated by the following conditions. The supply of labourers far exceeded the demands made by diversified farming, the apportionment of the land in certain districts was very unequal, the distribution of the rural population varied greatly and the ranks of the rural proletariat were enormously increased.

Fifty-two per cent. of the Hungarian population is engaged in farming. Two thirds of this number (3 million including their families), were farm labourers and small farmers who had to supplement their meagre incomes by working for wages on larger farms. The density of the rural population was 59 persons per square kilometre, twice as much as the density of the Danish and French rural population and decidedly more than that of Germany. It goes without saying that the density of the agrarian population in Eastern Europe is much less than in Hungary.

In a less accentuated form the agrarian problems of present-day Hungary are the same, since the re-occupation of former Hungarian territories hardly altered the situation. The land reforms carried out by the Succession

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As a result of the Regency's efforts to effect a measure of "land reform" by purchasing large estates and parceling them out to small farmers, the Catholic Church became the principal landowner in the country. It held one-eighteenth of all the arable soil, and a great variety of other tangible assets. As a rule the Church treated its tenants well—so well, indeed, that many of them viewed the possibility of "land reform" with misgiving. One could, indeed, argue that such a "reform" might well prove to be an enterprise of questionable value. Perhaps a peasant could live better by working on a large estate managed in accordance with the principles of just labor legislation than on a small plot left to his own devices. The fact remained that there was a strong demand for ownership of the soil by those who tilled it. At any rate, a thoughtful, forward-looking churchman could not view the situation with equanimity. Although the Church estates produced revenue which was needed for the upkeep of numerous religious, cultural, and charitable institutions, a strong Catholic social reform movement insisted upon a wider distribution of property. A solution was not found. Either there ought to have been "land reform" in the sense indicated, or laws should have been enacted to insure a decent livelihood to the farm worker. Nevertheless one must note that Kalot, the organization of Catholic peasant youth founded by an indefatigable Jesuit, was one of the strongest associations of the kind in Europe. It had more than 200,000 members when Hitler marched into Hungary, and its educational program was directed with intelligence and moral fervor.

Perhaps the major reason for the Church's loss of appeal to poorer citizens in many parts of Europe was not Karl Marx or Charles Darwin, not Voltaire or Hegel, though they and others undoubtedly had a good deal to do with it. Something far more tragic was the matter. The poor man drifted away because of the Church's natural but too exclusive concern